Kleindienst Loses Booking to Agnew

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Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst made a tentative campaign foray into Texas on President Nixon's behalf last night, but was cancelled out by Vice President Agnew before he could open his mouth.

Only after Kleindienst arrived in Fort Worth to address a convention of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, did he learn that he had been replaced on their program by Agnew.

As explained by John W. Hushen, the Justice Department's public information officer, who was travelling with the Attorney General, "the Association notified us that there was no need to have both the Vice President and the Attorney General speak."

In a telephone interview from Fort Worth, Hushen conceded that Kleindienst, whose schedule was arranged weeks in advance, was "not happy" about the snafu.

"There's no sense having a Cabinet officer fly down to Texas, only to learn that he's not speaking after all," he said.

"In a presidential campaign," Hushen observed, "there are bound to be mixups." It was not clear, however, who was to blame for the confusion—the Vice President's office, the Attorney General's staff, the Nixon reelection committee, the Retired Federal Employees, or all of the above.

The only thing left for Kleindienst to do was to detour to a reception given by the Federal Bar Association, of which the Attorney General was recently elected president. He had already been planning to "drop in" there.

It was the second time in a week that Agnew had bumped another Nixon administration official from a scheduled campaign appearance. Last week, he replaced Caspar Weinberger, director of the Office of Management and Budget, in Minneapolis, also without warning to the victim.

Dovan L. Shumway, press spokesman for the Nixon committee, was himself rather sur- Worth debacle. "Well, it's been that kind of a year," he said with a guffaw.

The situation was especially clumsy, since the Nixon committee had already released an advance text of Kleindienst's Fort Worth remarks in Washington.

Rather than his usual comments about the record of the Justice Department under President Nixon, the Attorney General's undelivered speech was a hard-hitting attack on Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern's proposal to grant amnesty to Vietnam-war draft resisters.

Hushen said that Kleindienst's remarks—predicting that "unconditional amnesty would be an open invitation for mass refusal to serve in a time of general mobilization"—would remain on the record.